

Does simple hack leave your cell phone conversations exposed?

Hauppauge, NY—Today, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) warned New Yorkers that their privacy rights might be threatened by a simple hack through a website that allows unauthorized users access into a cell phone's voicemail. Rep. Israel sent a letter to the Federal Communications Commission urging them to work with wireless carriers to make password-protected voicemail standard for mobile phones.

Rep. Israel said, "Cell phone hacking is not just confined to celebrities in England. You may not realize it, but any teenager could hack into your phone, as could someone with more pernicious intentions. Today I'm calling on the FCC to close this loophole that threatens our privacy rights, and I'm encouraging consumers to check that they have a password on their voicemail in place."

Captain Ken Bombace, Detective in the Suffolk County Police Department, Criminal Intelligence Section, voiced his support of Rep. Israel's advice to consumers.

Cpt. Bombace said, "The Suffolk County Police Department encourages all Suffolk County residents to establish a password-protected voicemail account for their cell phones. Any initiatives that require the use of passwords to protect personal voicemail messages would help to protect the privacy of our residents and prevent criminal activity."

Parul P. Desai, policy counsel for Consumers Union, the policy and advocacy division of Consumer Reports said, "Standardized voicemail password protection is key to securing access to private voicemail. Unfortunately, wireless carrier practices vary across the industry and too often consumers have to navigate through confusing contracts to understand the privacy settings available to them. Consumers deserve more straightforward, accessible privacy information from wireless companies to better protect themselves from 'spoofing'."

Rep. Israel and Cpt. Bombace demonstrated the ease with which one can hack an unprotected voicemail using an easily accessible website. On the site, an individual simply types in the phone number of a target whose voicemail they want to hack. Then, after a few quick steps, the

individual's own phone will be connected to the target's voicemail, and he will have the ability to listen to the target's messages as if they were his own.

While some cell phone companies have made it mandatory for users to enter a password to access voicemail, others still allow users to enter directly into voicemail without a password.

When asked about the security of cell phone voicemails during a congressional hearing last year, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said, "There is no question that greater protection can be accomplished by using password protection, and that's an area that should be looked at."

###

To view Congressman Israel's letter to the FCC on protecting cell phone voicemail security, [click here.](#)